

Facilities Planning

FLIGHT PLAN 2035

Executive Summary: Recommendations

Presented by: Facilities Planning Team, August 2026



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Introduction and Purpose

In the 2024–25 school year, Eden Prairie Schools conducted broad-based community outreach in order to develop a new 10-year academic vision, which became known as Flight Plan 2035. That community outreach resulted in strong community support for Flight Plan 2035 as measured by a statistically valid, random-sample survey in July 2025.

To realize Flight Plan 2035, the district must create environments that adapt to the needs of students — supporting flexible, personalized and future-ready learning. The district will design spaces that blur the lines between classroom and real world, between schools and communities, and between indoors and out. Each space will serve a purpose, encourage exploration and reflect the evolving ways students learn. Together, these facilities will form a connected, equitable system of engaging and inspiring places to grow.

The district convened a Facilities Planning Team to review current facilities, consider community input and make recommendations to the superintendent.

Facilities Planning Team purpose:

To build strong community understanding, engagement, and support for a long-term facilities plan that:

- Aligns our learning environments with the programmatic experiences envisioned in Flight Plan 2035;
- Inspires each of our students, families, and community members;
- Maintains high-quality, well-designed facilities that serve as community assets; and
- Creates spaces that bring people together for engagement, entertainment, and celebration — sustaining our shared pride, excellence, and reputation.

Facilities Planning Team members:

Prajna Keenigi, EPHS student

William Cutting, EPHS student

Laurie Nebeker, Teacher

Jessica Brent, Teacher

Natalie Richard, Teacher

Jodi Vullmuth, Teacher

Mark Anderson, Teacher

Shukri Mahamed, CMS Security Monitor

Leo Sanchez, MOC

Kristy Hymans, Forest Hills/Prairie View parent and PTO President's Council President

Casse Langford, EPHS parent and PTO President

Mike Grant, Coach

Liz Lindner, Prairie View/CMS parent, Prairie View PTO President and Foundation for Eden Prairie Schools Board Secretary

Dave Lindahl, Former City of Eden Prairie Staff Member

Dr. Jaysen Anderson, EPHS Principal

Joel Knorr, Forest Hills Principal

Dr. Shawn HoffmanBram, Executive Director of Community Education

Jason Mutzenberger, Executive Director of Business Services

Jody Ward-Rannow, School Board Director

Facilities Planning Team Work

The Facilities Planning Team met across eight primary working sessions from November 2025 through May 2026 to tour district properties, study operational and strategic needs, synthesize community input and produce recommendations.

Initial Site Exploration & Facility Tours (Fall 2025)

Bus Tour – Part 1: The team convened at Eden Prairie High School (EPHS) and conducted site visits to examine facilities at EPHS, Forest Hills, Valley View, Eden Lake, Oak Point/Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion, Cedar Ridge and Prairie View. At each visit, principals led the team through their building and offered perspectives on each building’s strengths and areas of opportunity. The day ended with a debrief session to synthesize takeaways and each facilities’ strengths and areas for improvement.

Bus Tour – Part 2: The team toured remaining facilities, including the Administrative Services Center (ASC), Community Education, Transportation and Central Middle School (CMS). The team again debriefed their visits at the end of the day.

Financial & Strategic Alignment (Winter 2025–26)

Operations & Finance: The team grew its operational knowledge, receiving presentations on school finance, different types of school funds, each fund’s uses and restrictions, and facilities, grounds and safety. They also completed a hands-on capital improvement budgeting exercise based on real examples of districtwide capital needs and funding restrictions.

Flight Plan 2035: The session centered on connecting facilities planning with Flight Plan 2035 core pillars, including Whole-Person Development, Adaptive & Individualized Learning, Seamless Life & Learning Connections, Purposeful &

Mindful Technology Use, and Integrated Outside Time. The team learned about current work happening to pilot initiatives that advance Flight Plan 2035.

Concept Design & Community Feedback (Winter/Spring 2026)

Big Picture Design Session: The team held a full-day working session to transition from research into design. The day began with brainstorming answers to a single question: “To deliver on the purpose of the Facilities Planning Team, what are the most important facility priorities and concepts we should include in the first draft of our plan for community feedback?” Those ideas were then grouped into similar themes and agreed upon through consensus. Throughout the day, the ideas were refined in order to develop the first draft of the facility plan for community feedback.

Feedback Synthesis & Plan Revision: The team reviewed initial feedback from students, staff and community members. Activities included a feedback gallery walk, team revisions to the draft priorities and concepts, and critical conversations to update and enhance concepts. By the end of the day, the team agreed upon an updated draft of the plan to share for additional community feedback.

Project Selection & Final Recommendations (Spring 2026)

Community Survey Preparation: The team synthesized all of the community’s feedback once again to identify specific facility projects. Using a consensus workshop to reach agreement, they organized projects by site and selected the top 10 projects to present in a third-party community survey.

Final Recommendations & Celebration: In their final session, the team reviewed community survey results with Peter Leatherman, updated their public-facing facility recommendations to Superintendent Dr. Swanson, reviewed next steps and celebrated the conclusion of the planning process.

Community Involvement

Overview of Process

The facilities planning process involved broad-based community outreach to ensure that the district's physical spaces align with Flight Plan 2035, the district's 10-year academic vision. Eden Prairie Schools utilized a variety of formal and informal channels to gather input, hosting more than 25 different engagement opportunities across two rounds of gathering feedback. These feedback sessions included student meetings spanning grades 4 through 12, virtual and in-person community meetings, staff meetings at every building and multiple surveys.

- Over 1,500 individuals participated directly in these conversations, including more than 145 students and 100+ staff members who were not part of the Facilities Planning Team.
- Broader input was also collected through community feedback forms and a statistically valid, random-sample survey to measure overarching support. These surveys included more than 1,100 responses.

Superintendent Swanson was clear throughout the engagement process that the facilities plan should reflect community feedback. Similar to the Flight Plan 2035 engagement process, the facilities planning process was built around a continuous, multi-stage feedback loop designed to ensure community voices directly guided the plan's development.

Responding to Community Feedback

Rather than treating engagement as a one-time event, the district built a continuous, multi-stage feedback loop to ensure community voices directly guided the plan's development. The process began with the Facilities Planning Team's initial draft ideas being put out to the broader community to identify

strengths, gaps and areas needing clarification. Once this initial input was gathered, the insights were brought back to the Facilities Planning Team.

The Facilities Planning Team analyzed the feedback, updated their priorities and refined the concepts before sending the revised framework back to the community for further validation — ultimately measuring overarching support through a third-party, statistically valid survey. This cyclical process actively transformed the plan, leading to several key adjustments. Examples include:

- **Consolidating Ideas:** Public input helped streamline the plan's focus to make it more cohesive. For example, the community indicated that the initial concepts for flexible spaces and fixed spaces overlapped significantly. In response, the team merged these into a single, unified concept focused on maximizing the overall use of every space.
- **Elevating Basic Needs and Security:** When community members and students expressed concerns regarding daily experiences — including restroom access, safety and privacy — the team explicitly added restroom and locker room upkeep as important priorities. Security was also elevated as a distinct focus area to ensure an integrated approach that keeps environments safe without making them feel unwelcoming.
- **Clarifying Facility Use:** While community and nonprofit access to district and school facilities remains highly valued, feedback prompted the team to update the plan to explicitly state that school spaces must be treated, scheduled and secured as learning environments first.
- **Separate Working Groups:** As community feedback surfaced specific operational, financial and architectural questions, the planning team realized the need to keep the primary facilities plan focused on strategic priorities. Consequently, they moved some of this specialized, detailed work to separate working groups for dedicated follow-up and execution (such as a districtwide shuttle and branding efforts).

Priority Areas

Throughout the design process, four key areas emerged as priorities for all facilities work. Rooted in Flight Plan 2035 and shaped by extensive community feedback, these pillars establish a clear, strategic framework for the future of our physical environments. Rather than just serving as broad goals, these four priority areas include specific, actionable concepts that will directly inform and guide the design, planning and execution of all upcoming facilities projects.

Priority Area 1: Meeting Basic Needs

This priority focuses on the stewardship of existing facilities by ensuring optimal structural maintenance and accessibility upgrades that promote learning for all, which includes addressing critical structural updates identified through a comprehensive facilities assessment. This area intentionally prioritizes both physical accessibility as well as inclusion and belonging for those with accessibility needs. It also emphasizes holistic security, balancing the implementation of modern security software and access controls with the creation of learning-centered, welcoming environments. Meeting Basic Needs is foundational to all other facilities efforts — we must take care of what we have before pursuing other environment-enhancing endeavors.

Priority Area 2: Improving Spaces and Experiences

This area is dedicated to fostering continuous wellbeing and maximizing the functional use of every district environment. To support physical, emotional, mental and social health, this priority focuses on intentionally designing spaces that maximize natural light, bring outdoor features inside and provide equitable access to regulation spaces. Furthermore, it seeks to outfit every facility to serve as many people as possible. This involves developing flexible spaces that adapt to changing needs alongside fixed spaces explicitly designed for authentic learning. Ultimately, this priority balances developing

high-quality learning environments with expanded access for students, staff, the community, businesses and nonprofits.

Priority Area 3: Elevating for the Future

Focused on challenging and supporting each student, this priority advances student outcomes in all areas. Performance is defined as demonstrations of growth and mastery both inside and outside the classroom. Keeping the district competitive so it remains a top choice for future families will require prioritizing investments in modern, expanded facilities — including dedicated, future-ready spaces for learning, arts, activities and athletics. Additionally, it seeks to increase authentic learning experiences by supporting each student's "Inspired Journey." By providing broad exposure to multiple career pathways and real-world applications of learning, the district aims to meet future workforce needs while utilizing partnerships to reduce costs for taxpayers.

The Function of "Concepts"

Concepts serve as the strategic bridge between broad, overarching vision (Priority Areas) and ground-level execution (specific projects). They are the actionable framework that ensures the district's high-level priorities are built into the physical environment. Specifically, their role in the plan is to:

- **Operationalize Priorities:** They translate high-level aspirations (e.g., "Improving Spaces and Experiences") into clear, focused objectives (e.g., "Foster continuous wellbeing" and "Maximize each space's use").
- **Guide Decision-Making:** They act as a rubric for evaluating future facilities projects. When a new project or renovation is proposed, Concepts can ensure designers directly fulfill a recognized need.
- **Organize Key Ideas:** They provide a structural framework to group the granular, day-to-day tactics — such as more natural light or flexible furniture — so that every small detail rolls up into a cohesive strategy.

Priority Area 1: Meeting Basic Needs

Concept: Maintain excellent facilities.

- Ensure every facility is in optimal structural maintenance with accessibility upgrades that promote learning for each.
- Key ideas:
 - Conduct a facilities assessment to identify current needs and prioritize updates in most needed schools/buildings.
 - Prioritize stewardship of existing facilities and resources before creating next things.
 - Make sure accessibility is the starting point for all designs and people's experience is prioritized while maintaining compliance.
- In a third-party survey, 82% of our community and 96% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Concept: Prioritize safety and security.

- Enhance student and staff safety, security and wellbeing in all district environments, both inside and outside.
- Key ideas:
 - Use all of our tools (processes, people, products) to promote safe environments and safe use of facilities.
 - Maintain an integrated system that promotes safety and security holistically.
 - Balance safety with learning-centered and welcoming environments.
- In a third-party survey, 82% of our community and 90% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Priority Area 2: Improving Spaces and Experiences

Concept: Foster continuous wellbeing.

- Prioritize physical, emotional, mental and social health through intentionally designed spaces in every building.
- Key ideas:
 - Designing for more natural light and flow of light within a space.
 - Bringing more of the outdoors and natural features inside of schools.
 - Clear policies, simple logistics, and equitable access to spaces that promote wellbeing and regulation, both indoors and outdoors.
- In a third-party survey, 82% of our community and 81% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Concept: Maximize each space's use.

- Design and outfit every space to be used to the greatest extent possible by as many people as possible.
- Key ideas:
 - Developing flexible spaces within each building that have multiple uses and adapt to changing needs.
 - Investing in fixed spaces within each building that have a defined purpose, especially for authentic learning.
 - Maintain learning environments while expanding student, staff, community, business and nonprofit access to facilities.
- In a third-party survey, 74% of our community and 85% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Priority Area 3: Elevating for the Future

Concept: Elevate student performance.

- Build facilities that challenge and support students of all abilities across academics, activities and athletics.
- Key ideas:
 - Performance means demonstrations and exhibitions of growth and mastery in all areas of learning, both inside and outside the classroom.
 - Invest in modern, expanded facilities to stay competitive with surrounding districts and remain a top choice for future families and students.
 - Dedicated space(s) for activities, with appropriate tools/storage.
 - Dedicated space(s) for the arts, with state-of-the art equipment and ample storage.
 - Dedicated space(s) for athletic training, exhibition and recovery.
 - Develop partnerships and collaborations that increase opportunities for students and reduce costs for taxpayers.
- In a third-party survey, 73% of our community and 82% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Concept: Increase authentic experiences.

- Grow opportunities for students to experience learning in environments similar to what they will encounter in the real world.
- Key ideas:
 - Support each student's Inspired Journey, with broad exposure to multiple career pathways.
 - Prepare students with real-world applications of their learning.
 - Meet future workforce needs of partners and businesses.
- In a third-party survey, 73% of our community and 85% of EP parents/caregivers rated this as important.

Key Projects for Consideration

A long-term facilities plan must support academic and extracurricular performance and growth. This plan will likely include construction, renovation, repair and facility improvement projects. The following are key projects that should be included in future planning:

Critical infrastructure upgrades for all sites

- Address maintenance needs across district sites, including repairing or replacing aging heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems

Secure, safe and welcoming spaces

- Improve school security infrastructure, including controlled access points within buildings and equipment like cameras and state-of-the-art security systems
- Foster both physical and psychological safety for students, staff, families and visitors

Building renovations and expansions

- Remodel or explore additions at school buildings to address current and projected enrollment needs
- Update spaces and expand facilities in alignment with programming needs (such more outdoor spaces)

Facilities better aligned with student populations

- Build and renovate special education spaces so they better align with current program needs, student supports and accessibility requirements
- Improve accessibility at district facilities based on current research on best practices and age-appropriateness, including early childhood spaces, outdoor areas, pathways and playgrounds

Dedicated career technical spaces

- Create or renovate dedicated career and technical education (CTE) spaces, career training hubs and studios for hands-on learning and career-connected programs for students and community members
- Make sure CTE, career training and studio spaces advance the vision of Flight Plan 2035

Enhanced fine arts and performance spaces

- Create and/or renovate fine arts and performance spaces for student instruction, rehearsals, performances and community events
- Explore opportunities to align fine arts spaces with CTE opportunities (e.g., woodworking near stages for set design)

Full-service medical, health and sports science facility

- Create a multifunctional complex that includes spaces for academic exploration and hands-on experiences across medical, health and sports science fields
- Provide activity and athletic spaces with year-round use, integrated with academic and career exploration opportunities

Recommended Next Steps

Consider strategies to manage enrollment that lead to more equitable distribution in order to meet student, family, staff and facility needs (e.g., reviewing and updating the in-district transfer process; this should not include boundary changes)

Consider a bond referendum in order to have the resources to move the most important projects forward

- Consider a second question for the multifunctional complex that includes spaces for academic exploration, hands-on experiences across medical, health and sports science fields, performing arts and activities/athletics

Explore alternative funding options to supplement a bond and increase the impact of community-supported efforts, such as public/private partnerships, naming rights, etc.

If a bond referendum is required, consider moving it sooner rather than later to avoid inflation-related impacts to construction costs and timelines (May 2027)

Make sure to maintain flexibility in spending funds as needed in order to meet both short-term needs and advance a long-term vision

Remember that excellent work is happening in the district that has put us in great shape across all areas, from academics to engagement to facilities

From a messaging perspective, be sure to explain and address how all current facilities are being utilized and maintained before promoting building, buying or expanding into new facilities